Nixon Jet Remodeling Costs $285,000

By Jack Anderson

The U.S. Treasury has already subsidized President Nixon's luxurious living at San Clemente and Key Biscayne. Now it is ponying up $1,785,000 to deck out his jet to suit H.R. Haldeman's and Pat Nixon's ideas of posh air comfort.

The White House recently ordered a new jet from Boeing to replace the well-traveled "Spirit of '76" as the President's lead plane. Haldeman personally took charge of the interior decorating and before he had finished, the bill had run up to $1.5 million.

When Pat Nixon found out about the appointments, she hit an air pocket. The former top White House aide, with typical Prussian efficiency, had put the staff quarters between the presidential suite and the quarters for extra family and guests.

This would have permitted top staffers to maintain their 24-hour-a-day access to the President, but the arrangement would have forced family and guests to squirm through the staff quarters to visit the President and First Lady.

After she discovered what Haldeman had done, Mrs. Nixon, who often has laid down the law to her strong-willed husband, insisted that the plane be re-designed to her own liking. As a result, the Air Force, which had faithfully followed the original Haldeman specifications, is now spending $285,000 more to conform to Pat's request that the guest lounge be next to the Nixon quarters.

Footnote: A spokesman for Mrs. Nixon confirmed that Haldeman drew up the original plans but she was unable to say whether any of the Nixons approved them before the first $1.5 million was spent. The new plane, like its predecessor, will be called the "Spirit of '76," the spokesman said. Those who have seen its deluxe comforts say it has little in common with the original spartan "Spirit of '76" which George Washington and his troops showed at Valley Forge.

Chilean Machismo—Simple Latin American machismo, or manhood, may have been a factor in the dramatic overthrow of President Salvadore Allende in Chile. The Chilean Army violated a 42-year tradition of keeping out of Chilean politics when it crushed Allende's Marxist government last week.

Long before the coup, American Ambassador Nathaniel Davis cabled the State Department that "discontent and plotting in the military services have been substantially greater..."

In his secret dispatch, he also reported: "It has been galling to military and civilians to have men in uniform tear-gassing women. Some officers' own women folk were in (the demonstrations) protesting shortages officers themselves have experienced. It is galling to have it implied women are braver than they."

Blood from Babies—As a nutritional experiment, the Agriculture Department was all set to draw blood from the jugular veins of ghetto babies until we started asking questions. Now the dangerous idea has been scrapped.

The department had planned to extract blood from infants to measure its vitamin, iron and protein content. So horrified was the Indian Health Services that it refused to let any babies under its jurisdiction be used for the experiment.

Although a highly skilled technician might draw blood safely from a baby's veins, there was no assurance Agriculture's project would be manned by such specialists. One bad mistake could traumatize a baby for life.

Following our inquiries, Agriculture Secretary Earl Butz's medical advisers assured us that all infant blood taken for the tests would be from heel-pricks, loberpricks or finger-pricks.

Honoring Howie—Sen. Carl Curtis (R-Neb.) is sponsoring a dinner for one of Washington's most unpopular men, former antipoverty czar Howard Phillips.

Poor Phillips was hounded from his job by the courts and Congress after he larded his agency with right-wing wreckers and ex-CIA snoops who intimidated employees and all but dismantled the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Curtis, who has opposed most antipoverty programs, is chairing the dinner this Friday because he feels Phillips should have "some of the recognition and credit he so richly deserves."

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